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ILLINOIS AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
TO CANADA

BY

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A. B. Knox College, 1913

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

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IN HISTORY

IN

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

May 31 1917

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPER-
VISION BY Miss Verna Cooley
ENTITLED Illinois and the Underground
Railroad to Canada,

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF Master of Arts

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on
Final Examination*

*Required for doctor's degree but not for master's.

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CONTENTS

I	ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD	1
II	GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT	7
III	PERSONNEL	13
IV	METHODS	20
V	ILLINOIS AND THE FUGITIVE IN CANADA	28
VI	DEGREE OF ORGANIZATION AND MOTIVE	40
VII	BIBLIOGRAPHY	44
	a. Source Material	
	b. Secondary Material	

I - THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Under the obligations of the Constitution, the act of harboring and secreting slaves was made illegal by the national government. Because of the presence of men in the North who were eager to betray the people who were breaking the law and to send the fugitive back into slavery, the performance of this act was not only illegal but secret. From these two factors the Underground Railroad developed. The origin of this process is thought to have been in the year 1818. This conclusion is based on the testimony of H. B. Leeper. He placed the earliest activities in the years 1819 and 1820, when a small colony of anti-slavery people from Brown County, Ohio, settled in Bond County, in the southern part of Illinois. From this locality they emigrated to Putnam County, where they continued to harbor the fugitive slaves. Leeper's father was one of this same type, who, being an enemy of slavery, had moved from Marshall County, Tennessee, to Bond County, Illinois, in 1816. He remained in Bond County until 1823. After moving to Morgan County and from there to Putnam County, he finally settled in Bureau County. His home sheltered many a fugitive slave.¹

In the years that witnessed the beginning of this process of helping slaves to attain freedom, bills were formulated in Congress to strengthen the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. The alarm of the South appears in connection with the diplomatic negotiations of 1826 and 1828 on the question of the fugitive slave. Clay, then Secretary of State, declared the escape of slaves to British territory to be a "growing evil".² In 1838, there were resolutions in Congress calling

1. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 41.

2. Ibid., p. 192.

for a bill providing for the punishment in the courts of the United States of all persons guilty of aiding fugitive slaves to escape or of enticing them away from their owners.³

Soon after 1835 the process was well established. Through the efforts of Dr. David Nelson, who had been driven from Missouri into Illinois on account of his anti-slavery views, Quincy was made a point of entrance for the slaves in the years 1839-1840.⁴ In 1839, the first known case of dispatching a fugitive from Chicago occurred.⁵ By 1840, the practice of harboring and secreting slaves was widespread. The decade of 1830-1840 marked the opening of new cotton fields. With this increase of area for slavery came the negro's chief reason for flight, his dread of being sold farther south, thus being separated from friends and family.

The increased activity of the anti-slavery people in Illinois made the border slave states realize that the security of their slave property was being menaced. In St. Louis, scarcely a week passed in which the increased business of the Underground Railroad was not chronicled. In 1842, the St. Louis Organ reported that "the depredations of abolitionists upon our citizens are becoming more frequent and daring daily. Accounts from all parts of the state convince us that a regular system has been adopted by the abolitionists in Illinois to rob this state of her slaves, and it is high time that a summary stop was put to this flagrant wrong. Doubtless, their agents are now in our very midst.....There is over four hundred thousand dollars worth of southern slaves in a town near Malden, Canada."⁶ Coddington, in the Liberty Convention for the South and West, held at Cincinnati, June 11, 1845, told his audience that the people of Illinois were doing a

3. Ibid., p. 193.

4. Ibid., p. 155.

5. Ibid., p. 42.

6. Western Citizen, September 23, 1842.

fair business under the name of the Underground Railroad.⁷ But he pointed out that they are compelled to meet the question of morals, for aiding the fugitive clashes at a thousand points with the interests of men. He also said that they were accused of stealing negroes, and the negroes of stealing boats and horses; therefore, the charge must be answered by applying the principle which Christ taught them, of judging what is right in case of our neighbor by making it our own.⁸

Because of the more perfect organization and concert action of the anti-slavery men in Illinois, the people of St. Louis held a meeting to adopt measures for greater security of negro property. Funds were raised and Commissioners, whose names were to be kept secret, were appointed. Resolutions were passed condemning all negro preaching and teaching. A memorial was adopted asking the legislature to pass a law forbidding all schools for education of the blacks and meetings for religious worship, except in the day time and when services were conducted by a regular ordained white minister or priest.⁹

From 1850 to 1860 was the period of the road's greatest activity, accelerated by the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. The reaction of the conductors toward this law was that of defiance, hence they displayed added zeal in aiding fugitives.¹⁰ After the signing of the Bill, a storm broke over the North with violence, political conventions, abolition meetings, and religious organizations poured forth a deluge of resolutions and petitions against the law. The Western Citizen printed a petition for the repeal of the Bill to be cut from the paper and circulated throughout the state. It was asserted that scarcely a man could be found who would not sign

7. The Western Citizen featured an interesting cartoon in 1844, showing the picture of a train, carrying fugitives, and going into a mountain tunnel. Under it was printed, "Liberty Line, Regular trips are announced with J. Cross as proprietor." Ibid., July 18, 1844.

8. Ibid., July 3, 1845.

9. Western Citizen, November 24, 1846.

10. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 24.

it.¹¹ The colored people of Chicago saw that if this law were enforced no colored person in the United States would be free from liability to slavery, hence they considered it expedient to appoint a vigilance committee to watch for attempts at kidnapping.¹²

A defiant and yet official action was taken by the Chicago Common Council, which passed resolutions requesting the citizens and police of Chicago to abstain from any and all interference in the capture and deliverance of the fugitives.¹³ The question was placed before the public for discussion in a mass meeting held in the City Hall. Resolutions were submitted to the people, which declared that "we recognize no obligations of a moral or legal value resting on us as citizens to assist or countenance the execution of this law." Frequent cheers interrupted the reading of the resolutions, and an outburst of enthusiasm showed the sympathy and satisfaction of the audience.¹⁴ Evidence of this open defiance of the law was not confined to Chicago. In reply to a speech given by Honorable William Thomas, entitled "Exposition and Defence of the Fugitive Slave Law", William Carter of Winchester, Illinois, wrote, "This fugitive slave bill, so far as I know, is the first ever passed by Congress commanding all good citizens to do what the Divine Law forbids. We are not bound to obey."¹⁵

The problem became so grave for Missourians that in 1857, the General Assembly, by joint resolutions, instructed the Missourian representative in Congress to demand of the Federal government the securing of their property as guaranteed by the Constitution, and in particular against the action of certain citizens of Chicago who had aided fugitives to escape and had hindered and mistreated Missouri citizens in search of their slaves.¹⁶ In 1859, the Western Citizen made the

11. Western Citizen, October 8, 1850. 12. Ibid., October 8, 1850.

13. Mann, The Chicago Common Council and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 p.70.

14. Ibid., p. 72.

15. A Reply to Hon. Wm. Thomas' "Exposition and Defence of the Fugitive Slave Law" by William Carter. Winchester, Illinois. Printed at the office of the Western Unionist, 1851, p. 5. 16. Trexler, Slavery in Missouri, p. 203.

following estimate of the activity of the Underground Railroad, rather extravagantly phrased, but nevertheless indicating the degree of boldness with which they advertised it. "This road is doing better business this fall than usual. The Fugitive Slave Law has given it more vitality, more activity, more passengers, and more opposition, which invariably accelerates business....We can run a lot of slaves through from almost any part of the bordering States into Canada within forty-eight hours and we defy the slave holder to beat that if they can."¹⁷

These reports of the activity of the Underground Railroad mean nothing if one does not know how many fugitives were actually aided. It was no doubt a tendency of these people who harbored and secreted the slave, under the spell of danger and adventure, to exaggerate the extent of their secret undertaking. However, when numbers are given, with due allowance for over estimation, one can see concretely the degree of the road's activity. The entire number of fugitives who escaped annually from the South has been roughly estimated at two thousand. Reports of numbers transported on the Underground Railroad through Illinois tend to substantiate this estimate. When one considers the number of termini from the East to Iowa and that each aided fully as many as Chicago, it is not difficult to account for the two thousand. Take, for example, some numbers given in 1854 by the Western Citizen. Fifteen fugitives in the fore part of one week arrived in Chicago by the Underground Railroad.¹⁸ December 16, 1854, it was reported that since May 6, 1854, four hundred eighty-two were taken by the Underground Railroad across to Canada from Detroit.¹⁹ As many as twenty at a time were said to have left Chicago for

17. Western Citizen, November 9, 1859. The point about the increasing number of passengers is doubtful. From Chatham in Canada, J. E. Ambrose of Elgin, Illinois, received word that "the accursed Fugitive Slave Bill is driving them daily by hundreds into this country". Ibid., October 8, 1850. This probably referred to the negroes who had settled in Northern Illinois, and were fleeing for fear of kidnappers.

18. Free West, December 14, 1854.

19. Chicago Daily Democrat, December 16, 1854.

Canada and freedom.²⁰ The largest number found in this year was given for the three months ending September 1, 1854, one hundred seventy-six passengers, and for the three months ending December 1, one hundred twenty-four, which made a total of three hundred for six months.²¹

20. Springfield State Register, September 21, 1854.

21. Free West, December 21, 1854.

In January, 1855, the Chicago Democrat reported, "On Friday night last sixteen human chattels from the Sunny South came up on the Underground Railroad on their way toward the North Star." Chicago Democrat, January 6, 1855.

II - GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT

Illinois, bordered by Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and with her boundaries increased by the windings of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, was easy of access for the slave¹. The rivers served as channels of escape, especially through the regions hostile to the fugitive. Missouri, extending into free territory, became the chief sufferer. The Mississippi for hundreds of miles alone separated Missouri from an ever watchful abolitionist minority in Illinois. The great interstate shipping along the Mississippi offered a chance for freedom to any plucky black who might be hired as a boat hand or stowed away by a sympathetic crew till a free port was reached². In addition to this close connection with slave territory, the Illinois Underground Railroad was in communication with the lines of Iowa³ and Indiana⁴. At Davenport the fugitives crossed the river into Illinois, and from there they travelled through a comparatively safe and friendly territory to Chicago.

1. A negro from the state of Virginia was resolved to find an asylum from slavery. He followed the Ohio to its mouth, then went up the Mississippi to the neighborhood of Alton, where he received provisions and was taken on to Springfield. Western Citizen, November 16, 1843.

2. Trexler, Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865, p. 173.

3. Beginning at Tabor, Fremont County, near the State line, the Abolitionists had stations extending by way of Des Moines, Grinnell, Iowa City, and Springdale to Davenport. B. F. Gue, History of Iowa, p. 373.

4. Fugitives were sent into Indiana from Wilmington and Joliet, Will County, to Crown Point, Lake County. George H. Woodruff, History of Will County, p. 557. Since the slave owner invariably went to Chicago to look for his property, this line was no doubt used to avoid him.

While the large number of slaves came from Missouri and Kentucky⁵, they also made their way from Virginia⁶, and Tennessee⁷, but rarely from the more remote sugar and cotton growing states⁸. Slaves entering Illinois from the South and Southeast found a hostile territory and were obliged to depend on their own resources⁹. They crossed the river in the vicinity of Cairo which resented any implication of complicity in the Underground Railroad, as is shown in the Cairo City Times which says, "The impression has gone abroad that there is to be an Underground Railroad from this place to Chicago, and that negroes will be induced to run away from Missouri and Kentucky. We assure our friends abroad that such fears are entirely without foundation."¹⁰

5. Slave owners who lived in Kentucky on the Ohio River were liable to loss of property, as is illustrated by the following incident. A negro was permitted by his owner to visit his free wife who lived in Shawneetown. He availed himself of the opportunity to go farther North, but was captured near Atlanta in Logan County, in spite of the fact that Abolitionists made an attempt to smuggle him into Canada. Ottawa Free Trader, August 8, 1857.

6. A negro who had been sold away from his family and taken somewhere near the line between Virginia and Kentucky, followed the Ohio, then the Mississippi to Alton, where he received aid. Western Citizen, November 16, 1843.

7. Dr. J. D. Mason of Jackson, Tennessee, found his fugitive slave near Centralia, Illinois, and in consequence of taking his property he was the object of the hostility of the Abolitionists. St. Clair Tribune, November 24, 1855.

8. Chicago Daily Democrat, December 5, 1859.

In the Western Citizen of July, 1845, it is reported that a husband and wife who had travelled on foot from Georgia, came into town. They desired to better their condition, so they started on a visit to some relatives who had preceded them several years ago and settled in Massachusetts. Western Citizen, July 3, 1845.

9. The following item illustrates the dangers of a fugitive in travelling through Southern Illinois. Two negroes who had escaped from their owners in Kentucky the other day arrived in Chicago on the Illinois Central Railroad on Tuesday night, "having safely passed the snares and traps laid for fugitives in Jonesboro (Union County) and other towns in Egypt." Chicago Daily Democrat, December 15, 1859.

10. Cairo City Times, February 7, 1855.

The chief points of entrance were Chester¹¹, Alton¹², and Quincy¹³. The tracing of continuous routes from these starting points is a matter of guesswork unless evidence could be gained at each station of its cooperation with the next station. But given the three chief points of entrance, the general direction northeast, and individual stations, with some evidence of cooperation in certain localities, one can form an opinion of three general pathways followed by the fugitive. Using Siebert's map with evidence gained from other sources, one sees that it is probable that one pathway from Chester led to Sparta, about twenty miles northeast, thence to Centralia and from there north, possibly through the friendly territory of Will County to Chicago¹⁴; the second, from Alton, northeast to Jacksonville, then through the vicinity of La Salle and Ottawa to Chicago¹⁵; and third, from Quincy, through the neighborhoods of Mendon, Farmington, Galesburg, Princeton, La Salle and ending at the terminus, Chicago¹⁶.

11. Harris, Negro Slavery in Illinois, p. 60.

12. Alton Daily Courier, December 1, 1853.

Springfield Illinois Daily Journal, October 12, 1859.

13. Western Citizen, June 30, 1846.

14. These references and the following give evidence of the location of a station at the particular place, the connection being a matter of guesswork and probability since the general direction is the same.

Sparta, Belleville Advocate, September 25, 1851.

Centralia, St. Clair Tribune, November 24, 1855.

Will County, Western Citizen, August 25, 1846.

15. Jacksonville, Charles H. Rammelkamp, Illinois College and the Anti-Slavery Movement, Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, 1908, p.200.

La Salle, Western Citizen, September 9, 1848.

Ottawa, Ottawa Free Trader, December 31, 1859.

16. Mendon, Western Citizen, November 2, 1843.

Farmington, Ibid., September 16, 1842.

Galesburg, History of Knox County, pp.210-211.

Princeton, Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 41.

Chicago was the great terminus, the point where most of the lines converged. Here the slave was virtually safe, for he was not only assured of protection from white people, but the negro element was strong enough to prevent his capture.¹¹ The colored population did not hesitate to resist officers of the law and slaveholders. The Western Citizen of November, 1850, tells of a slaveholder who, after taking his property, was overtaken five miles out of the city by the negroes. The slave was rescued by them and sent off to Canada¹⁸. When attempts were made by the people to rescue a fugitive the colored people always formed part of the mob¹⁹. The city proved to be an unpleasant place for the slaveholder or slave-catcher, as was evident in 1857, when Samuel Thompson came to Chicago with a negro boy who was not a slave. It was rumored about that the boy was a slave and that Thompson was taking him back to bondage. A large crowd gathered about his lodging house and threatened violence. Although an officer, after an interview with Thompson, assured the people that all was right, the crowd was not quieted, and the man under suspicion was forced to submit to imprisonment in order to escape violence²⁰. The realization of the attitude of Chicago by Southerners is aptly expressed by the Cairo Weekly Times, "They are undoubtedly the most riotous people in this State. Say nigger and slave-catcher in the same breath and they are up in arms."²¹

17. "Besides those who pass through here,.... there are a number who make up their mind to stay here, believing that they will be almost as safe.....as they would be in her Majesty's the Queen's Dominions." Chicago Daily Democrat, December 5, 1859.

18. Western Citizen, November 5, 1850.

19. Rock River Democrat, November 20, 1860.

20. Rockford Register, September 5, 1857.

21. Cairo Weekly Times and Delta, September 9, 1857.

Few lines were known in the South except those developed by some Covenant²² Communities between Chester and Centralia. The Southeast was the enemy's country for the fugitive. Bitter animosity was felt by the people of this region toward any person aiding the slave and also toward any section which distinguished itself in that respect. This feeling is expressed by the Shawneetown Gazette as a result of the satisfaction expressed by Chicago over the discharge of a slave from the claims of a slave agent.²³ The paper says, "We of the South do not regard Chicago as belonging to Illinois. It is as perfect a sink hole of abolitionism as Boston or Cincinnati."²⁴

When the fugitive reached western and northern Illinois, he was placed less on his own resources. This is shown by the multiplicity of stations in that part of the State. North and west of the Illinois River there was scarcely a county that did not have many places of refuge²⁵. It is even possible to add to Siebert's map in counties already well filled, additional stations, Bristol, Kendall County, and Troy Grove, La Salle County. The aggressive leaders were of New England descent²⁶ and anti-slavery people from the South, whose presence was especially marked in Bond, Putnam, and Bureau counties²⁷.

22. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 32.

23. Chicago Daily Journal, June 7, 1851.

24. Belleville Advocate, July 17, 1851.

25. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 113.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

27. In 1843 the Putnam County anti-slavery society passed resolutions to the effect that "We are carefully determined to protect all fugitives." Harris, Negro Slavery in Illinois, p. 115.

At the proceedings of the Christian Anti-Slavery Convention held at Greenville in Bond County, October 20, 1846, it was resolved that "no man can deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped unto him, or refuse to harbor or feed the hungry, needy man, or a fugitive slave, without coming under the denunciation of those represented by the Saviour on his left hand in Matthew 24: 41." Western Citizen, November 3, 1846.

III - PERSONNEL

In every section of Illinois distinguished for its anti-slavery sentiment, one finds courageous leaders who were bold in proclaiming their principles and so identified with the Underground Railroad that they were jealously watched and often betrayed. They were not the kind of people whom one would naturally expect to engage in such an adventurous and reckless pursuit, for they came from the quiet and orderly class of the community, ministers, college professors, farmers, lawyers, and doctors.

Quincy contributed to the personnel of the Underground Railroad Nelson, one of the first engaged in this work, Eells, and Van Dorn. In 1842, Eells was tried under the fugitive slave act of Illinois for secreting and harboring a slave. The decision of the court was averse, and he was fined four hundred thousand dollars.¹ From the testimony of Van Dorn one learns that in a service of twenty-five years he helped onward two or three hundred fugitives.²

The abolition views of the faculty of Illinois College were frankly avowed when President Beecher said that criticism would never silence them. Professor Turner

1. The case was taken on a writ of error, first to the Supreme Court of the State, and after the death of Eells to the Supreme Court of the United States. In both instances the judgment of the original tribunal was confirmed. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 278. The points brought out by the case were: (1) that the State has the right to legislate on the subject of runaway slaves; therefore, it may prohibit the introduction of negro slaves into its territory and punish its citizens who introduce them, provided it does not interfere with the right of the master to his slave or infringe upon that position of the subject covered by the Congress of the United States; (2) that the escaping of a slave does not make it free, but he still remains the property of his master subject to arrest and punishment. This last point is a repetition of the latter part of Judge Caton's charge to the jury in the Lovejoy Case. Harris, Negro Slavery in Illinois, p. 113.

2. Wilson, History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America. Vol. II, p. 67.

was very active in the Underground Railroad. In his reminiscences he told of piloting three negro women to the house of a certain Azel Pierson from whence they were helped onward to Canada³. Among the students Samuel Williard, William Carter, and J. A. Coleman, all of whom belonged to abolitionist families, went so far as to abduct a negro slave, the property of a woman visiting in Jacksonville. The students were not prosecuted, but Julius Williard, the father of Samuel, was indicted in the Morgan County Circuit Court and fined twenty dollars and costs.⁴

The same year as that of the Eells and Williard cases, Owen Lovejoy was tried in the Circuit Court of the County of Bureau before John Dean Caton, one of the justices of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois, October, 1843, for harboring and secreting a negro woman called Nancy⁵. The counsel for Lovejoy was Collins. The tragedy of his brother caused him to persist in his flight against slavery. In 1854, he was elected to the legislature on that issue.⁶ Before the year of his indictment he openly counselled the negro to "take all along your route, so far as is absolutely necessary to your escape, the horse, the boat, the food."⁷

3. Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society.

Rammelkampf, Illinois College and the Anti-Slavery Movement.

Incident of Turner was taken from his reminiscences in the Daily Journal of August 2, 1884.

4. The Supreme Court through Judge Scates expressed the opinion that, "A slaveholder has perfect right to pass through Illinois with his slaves, and comity between states will protect him in regarding the slaves as such, while passing through our limits. Harris, Negro Slavery in Illinois, p. 114.

5. It was in this case that Judge Caton when he charged the jury, said that if a master voluntarily brings his slave into free territory that slave becomes free, but if the slave comes into this state without the consent of his master he is nevertheless still a slave. Western Citizen, October 26, 1843.

6. Bateman and Selby, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, p. 345.

7. Western Citizen, July 26, 1842.

These three decisions concerning the offences of Eells, Williard, and Lovejoy served only to arouse the abolitionists. The Illinois Anti-Slavery Society at its sixth Anniversary, held in Chicago, June 7, 1843, elected Richard Eells President for the ensuing year and took the ground in one of its resolutions that by the Constitution of the United States free states are not bound to deliver up fugitives. At the seventh anniversary of the same society, held in Peoria, in June, 1844, the executive committee made a full report of all the fugitive slave cases during the year previous and praised the conduct of Lovejoy, Eells, and Williard⁸.

The community which seemed most permeated with the spirit of helping the slave was Knox County. Here one finds John Cross, a Presbyterian minister, who made no secret of his attitude toward slavery. In 1844, he was indicted for hindering Andrew Borders from retaking a colored servant, Susan, and for harboring and secreting her⁹. Andrew Borders was a resident of Eden, Randolph County. Two of his colored women servants who had left him were captured at the home of Cross and placed in the Knoxville jail¹⁰. The imprisonment of Cross was used to arouse anti-slavery sentiment. In the Western Citizen of July, 1844, he wrote a highly colored description of his treatment in jail. The account of his experiences was copied by other anti-slavery sheets, The Voice of Freedom, The Liberator, and the Valparaiso Indiana Ranger.¹¹

Galesburg, perhaps due to the pride of later generations which led them to preserve the experiences and exploits of their predecessors who were prominent in the community, stands out as probably the principal Underground Railroad

8. Harris, Negro Slavery in Illinois, p. 115.

9. Western Citizen, May 16, 1844.

10. Harris, Negro Slavery in Illinois, p. 106.

11. Western Citizen, July 18, 1844.

Station in Illinois. This prominence is also due to the evidence of cooperation between the residents of Galesburg and the surrounding neighborhood. From the beginning the inhabitants of Galesburg, which was founded in 1837, by Presbyterians and Congregationalists who united to form one religious society under the name of the Presbyterian Church of Galesburg as a result of intense anti-slavery sentiment, was a place where the fugitive was sure of a refuge¹². George Davis, Nehemiah West, Neely, Blanchard, and Samuel Hitchcock were willing not only to shelter the fugitive but to pilot him onward by way of Andover and Ontario to Stark County, where they were received by Wychoff, S. G. Wright, and W. W. Webster¹³.

The Ottawa Rescue case of 1859 was widely known throughout the State, for seven people at one time were indicted by the Grand Jury of the United States District Court at Chicago for aiding a fugitive to escape. Three of these, who were said to be among the best and wealthiest inhabitants of Ottawa, were arrested and imprisoned. The first of the series of the trials resulted in the conviction of John Hossack, a gentleman of wealth and prominence, and an earnest combatant of slavery, for aiding in the rescue of "Jim", a fugitive slave, from the custody of Albright acting as Deputy Marshal, owner's agent and jailor of Union County¹⁴. The evidence was so direct that the jury could do nothing but let the law take its course; however, they recommended the prisoner to mercy, the object of the counsel of the government having been stated in the course of the trial as not imprisonment nor an excessive fine, the purpose being merely conviction under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1851.¹⁵ In October the three of the rescuers were sentenced.

12. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 96.

13. History of Knox County, p. 210.

14. Chicago Press and Tribune, March 8, 1860.

15. Rockford Republican, March 22, 1860.

Hossack's sentence was a fine of one hundred dollars and ten days' imprisonment, and Claudius B. King's, ten dollars and one day's imprisonment. Aside from these penalties a bill of costs for each remained: Hossack's was two thousand, five hundred dollars; Stout's, two thousand; and King's fifty dollars¹⁶. As to whether these amounts were ever paid one cannot give any evidence. If the type of conductors in Ottawa was the same as those already shown, one can infer that these convictions would increase rather than decrease the activity of those attacking slavery. This case is an example of the activities of the Underground Railroad carried to the extreme of abducting the negro. Where seven were arrested and convicted for this bold deed, hundreds were quietly and secretly conducting on the road in a more unobtrusive manner.

Among the pioneers of Will County, Samuel Cushing and Peter Stewart were intimately connected with the Underground Railroad. Cushing was indicted in July, 1843, for aiding four negro slaves who came from the State of Missouri. Since the prosecuting attorney was not ready for trial, a nol pros was entered and Cushing was released¹⁷. The Stewart home, located at the junction of the Kankakee and Forked Creeks, was open to fugitive slaves. The complimentary and somewhat fanciful title of "President of the Underground Railroad" has been applied to Stewart¹⁸.

A brief glimpse has been given of the leaders of the Underground Railroad who sent their passengers on to Chicago. These leaders received more publicity because their methods were bolder, and since they had become marked men, they were prosecuted. Chicago was so in sympathy with the fugitives' attempt to realize freedom, that the passing of negroes even in large groups of ten or twenty was related in contemporary accounts with no reference to particular conductors.¹⁹

16. Aurora Beacon, October 11, 1860.

17. George H. Woodruff, History of Will County, p. 557.

18. Ibid., p. 267. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 69.

19. The following is an example of the kind of account which is given, "Seven colored fugitives from slavery passed through this city yesterday morning, and are by this time safe in the Queen's dominions." Chicago Daily Democrat, August 10, 1859.

However, if the fugitive was captured by a slave-agent there were certain men who were willing to defend the fugitive. They openly maintained the right to give the fugitive aid, and to become the counsel of the conductor prosecuted for this act. At the trial of Hossack six of the leading lawyers of Chicago, Isaac N. Arnold, Joseph Knox, B. C. Cook, J. V. Eustace, E. Leland, and E. C. Larned, presented his side of the case.²⁰ The counsel for Owen Lovejoy was James H. Collins.²¹

In defence of the action of the citizens in carrying a fugitive away before the decision of the Judge was given, Dr. Dyer, sometimes termed the President of the Underground Railroad,²² and J. H. Collins²³ spoke in a mass meeting of the citizens. Collins gave a brief statement of the case, pointing out that all laws contrary to Divine Law are null and void and that while State officers may act in the capacity of slave-hunters where no State law prohibits it, the act would be purely voluntary on their part and not their legal duty.²⁴

Following the official defiance of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 by the Common Council of Chicago, there was a public meeting endorsing the action of the Council, October 22, 1850. Among the names serving on the Committee on Resolutions at this meeting, one finds Lemuel C. Freer,²⁵ George Mannierre, and Isaac Arnold. The spokesmen were Collins, Dr. Dyer, Larned, and Mannierre. The forceful but rather sensational manner in which Collins addressed the people shows the degree of his convictions on this subject. His first words were, "Honor, eternal honor

20. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 283.

21. Western Citizen, October 26, 1843.

22. Western Citizen, December 22, 1846.

23. Collins was a lawyer who came to Chicago in the fall of 1833. He entered into partnership with Judge John D. Caton in 1834. He was especially strong as a pleader, and was an uncompromising slavery man who often aided runaways. Bateman and Selby, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, p. 113.

24. Western Citizen, November 3, 1846.

25. Lemuel C. Freer came to Chicago in 1836. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1840. Bateman and Selby, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, p. 176.

to the Chicago Common Council. Damnation eternal to those who voted for or dodged the vote on the infamous slave bill. The men who voted for it are bad; the men who sneaked away to avoid the responsibility of representing their constituents are both bad and base."²⁶ The following evening, October 23, Stephen A. Douglas, who had happened at the meeting where the framers of the Fugitive Slave Bill were denounced by James Collins, answered the challenge by defending the law. He swayed the people by his oratory and logic to the extent that they adopted the resolutions he had framed.²⁷ Friday evening, October 25, the largest meeting of the year was held to answer Douglas' speech and resolutions. The principal speech of the evening was delivered by Edwin C. Larned in which he said that the law, although designed to carry out the provisions of the Constitution, was in itself unconstitutional, since it denied the rights of habeas corpus and trial by jury, providing a different mode of trial which was to be a summary and was to prove the question of slavery or freedom.²⁸

As editors of the Western Citizen, Zebina Eastman and Hooper Warren were champions of the fugitive, giving the Underground Railroad process some appearance of organization by means of engendering the spirit of cooperation. The exchange of information concerning the activity of the Underground Railroad by the Chicago papers and the papers of the whole state enabled readers to see that their effort to aid a slave was but one step in a continuous process. Eastman's association with anti-slavery journalism did not begin with the Western Citizen. In Vermont he established the Free Press. After he came west he worked first on the Peoria Register

26. Mann, The Chicago Common Council and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, p. 73.

27. Ibid., pp. 74-80.

28. Ibid., p. 5.

29. Bateman and Selby, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, pp. 145, 577.

and finally with Hooper Warren, who also had had much previous experience, began the publications of the Genius of Liberty. In 1842, at the invitation of some prominent abolitionists, one of whom was Philo Carpenter, they moved the paper to Chicago, where it was issued under the name Western Citizen, later changed to the Free West.²⁹

29. Bateman and Selby, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, pp. 145, 577.

IV METHODS

The conductors on this road not only had to avoid the penalties of the law, but they were held in contempt and suspicion by many of their neighbors. Governor Ford in 1843 characterized the fugitive's friends as "the fanatical misguided sect called Abolitionists" who received no encouragement from the people of Illinois. He also said that ninety-nine out of every hundred of the citizens look "with indignation and abhorrence upon the conduct of an incendiary and misguided few who have interfered, and are disposed to continue to interfere with the right of the people of Missouri to a class of persons there made private property by the Constitution and laws of your State."¹ Very little evidence would in the nature of the case be left concerning the kinds of methods employed by the leaders in conveying the fugitive onward. One has to rely chiefly on personal reminiscences of the leaders for the interesting details of their adventurous and daring exploits. Secrecy was absolutely necessary.

The hostility of Jacob Knightlinger, a Justice of the Peace in Knox County, was an example of what the abolitionist incurred when aiding a fugitive.² About the year 1840 he observed a wagon-load of negroes being taken in the direction of the home of John Cross, a man who made no secret of his principles. Knightlinger with several of his friends investigated the Cross premises and found that their suspicions proved true. By their action, John Cross was indicted for harboring and secreting fugitives. In contrast to the people who aided the fugitive, there were

1. Thomas Ford, Governor of Illinois, to Thomas Reynolds, Governor of Missouri, April 13, 1843, Governor Letter-Books, 1843-1850.

2. Harris, Negro Slavery in Illinois, p. 106.

men whose practice was to pursue slaves and deliver them to agents, doubtless to receive the reward. In the neighborhood of Wilmington, Will County, there was a Dick Cox who drove a pedlar's wagon and professed to be engaged in the business of capturing slaves. In 1846, he with David Masters captured two slaves, took them to the Justice of the Peace and put them in jail before the people were up. A warrant of commitment was directed to the Sheriff of Will County "in the name of the people of Illinois," stating that Elizabeth Freeman and others were accused of being runaway slaves and therefore requiring said sheriff to take their bodies and commit them to jail, there to remain until discharged by due process of law. Sheriff Brodie with the aid of some lawyers examined the warrant. They decided that it was invalid and therefore he was not legally bound to act.³ As soon as people of the type of Cox and Masters heard of the presence of fugitives they would procure a warrant from some "over-persuaded Justice of the Peace" and would search the homes of those under suspicion. S. G. Wright's home in Stark County was searched at nine o'clock at night by the constable at the instigation of two slave hunters, White and Gordon.⁴ The disapproval of the whole community of Jacksonville was directed toward the actions of Julius Williard, and of three students of Illinois College, Samuel Williard, William Carter, and J. C. Coleman, who attempted to assist a slave to escape. In order to show the public that their town had not endorsed the action of the abolitionists, the people held a meeting, February 23, 1843, in which they resolved that since they believed that there existed regular bands of abolitionists organized to run negroes through the State, they would form an Anti-Negro Stealing Society to break up this movement.⁵

3. Western Citizen, August 25, 1846.

4. Ibid., February 23, 1847.

5. Rammelkampf, Illinois College and the Anti-Slavery Movement, Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, 1908, p. 200.

Various methods were used by the abolitionists in their endeavor to aid the slave. The fugitive usually travelled in groups of two or three, sometimes a family escaped, but with great danger of recapture. It was necessary to conceal the fugitive until suspicion cleared away, for often the slave-owner or agent was close upon his quarry and both the pursued and pursuer would be in the same neighborhood. Samuel Cushing of Wilmington, Will County, concealed fugitives in the upper room of his cabin during the day until they could travel at night.⁶ A hollow hayrick with a blind entrance was used by Deacon Jirah Platt of Mendon, Adams County, for a place of hiding.⁷ The story still circulates in Galesburg, Knox County, concerning the use of the gallery of the old First Church as a place of refuge for fugitives who were being aided by members of that church.⁸ Clothing for men, women, and children was kept in readiness for the bedraggled negro who had escaped with only the clothes on his back.⁹

When one stops to consider the long distance the negro had to travel, it is not surprising that he made use of the first horse or boat available. The fugitives were encouraged in the practice by the abolitionists. A runaway negro who was taken care of by an abolitionist in the vicinity of Jacksonville until he was able to travel was advised to take the first horse he could find. He did so, and the owner of the horse was afterwards apprized of its whereabouts and assured of its return.¹⁰ It was not always possible to return such property, hence the

6. George H. Woodruff, History of Will County, p. 557.

7. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 63.

8. Ibid., p. 64.

9. Susan Short May, historian of the Rochelle Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, in a story of her early life in Illinois, relates that when she was a child "The Underground Railroad had a station in Bristol. At Mrs. Wheeler's I used to see clothing for men, women, and children kept in readiness when they should stop on their way North to Canada." Illinois Historical Society Journal, p. 127.

10. Chicago Daily Democrat, March 9, 1850.

abolitionists were confronted with a question of ethics. Both Lovejoy and Coddington considered this case parallel to that of a victim in the captivity of Indians who is not stealing when he takes the means of escape.¹¹ Where there was a party of two or three fugitives, they were often loaded into a wagon and conveyed to the next station. Dilly and Parker of Knox County disguised their load of negroes by hiding them under oat-straw.¹² Some of the fugitives were fortunate enough to smuggle on board north-bound steamboats on the Mississippi River, thus escaping to Northern Illinois, where they were sure of aid in reaching Chicago.

From the material examined, one finds only evidence of the use of the Illinois Central and Michigan Central Railroads.¹³ The Western Citizen reported in 1859, which is a safe date, that two negroes had arrived on the Illinois Central.¹⁴ Cairo, however, denied that the Railroad was a means of escape, having in mind that its management had been accused of complicity in the Underground Railroad. The City Times said, "The Illinois Central is no Underground Railroad affair and has no Underground Railroad connections."¹⁵ This may have been true that it was not a part of the process, consciously, but nevertheless slaves in disguise may have managed to travel without being arrested. As early as 1854, fifteen fugitives from Missouri were shipped off from Chicago to Canada on the Michigan Central Railroad.¹⁶

11. Western Citizen, July 26, 1842; Ibid., July 3, 1845.

12. History of Knox County, p. 211.

13. Harris questions Siebert's theory that railroads were used for transporting fugitives. He says that before 1850 there were none in operation, and in the period of 1850-1860 he finds no evidence of their use for this purpose. According to Siebert, three railroads were used, the Chicago and Rock Island from Peru, La Salle County, to Chicago, the Illinois Central from Cairo and Centralia to Chicago, and the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy to Chicago.

14. Chicago Daily Democrat, December 15, 1859.

15. Cairo City Times, August 4, 1854.

16. Free West, December 14, 1854.

Although there may have been less hardship in this method of travel, there was a far greater chance of being arrested. The following incident illustrates the danger of detection when escaping on a railroad. A fugitive who was the property of a Mrs Bohdecker of Vicksburg had escaped from the steamer "Kate Frisbie", on which boat he had been employed. He came to Cairo on the steamer Southern, and intended to make his way north on the Illinois Central Railroad, but he lost his chances of freedom shortly after he had entered the State, for he was arrested on the train just as it was ready to leave Cairo for Chicago.¹⁷

The work of the Chicago Underground Railroad conductors was to help the fugitives secure passage on Canada-bound vessels. This opportunity for freedom proved too tempting for the trusty slave whom Uriah Hinch brought with him to Chicago to help him identify a fugitive. He deserted his master, escaped on board a steamer and sailed for Canada.¹⁸ The St. Louis Reveille printed an interesting letter from a Harry Ryan of Chicago, who purported to be concerned about the slave property of the Missourians and solicited funds from them to aid him in the work of preventing negroes from embarking on the steamboats. He reported that four slaves were run off upon the Great Western with Captain Walker's knowledge, for after the boat left the wharf Dr. Dyer, a prominent Underground Railroad conductor, stated that he had placed a slave whom he had rescued on board with three others.¹⁹ Some of the captains were hostile, but the Illinois, which ran between Chicago and Detroit, with Blake as captain, was considered safe for Canada-bound passengers.²⁰

17. Cairo City Gazette, March 29, 1859.

18. Western Citizen, October 29, 1850.

19. Ibid., October 16, 1845.

20. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 83.

The sympathetic interest in the slave was not always confined to the occasional aid given to the fugitive. It was often expressed in a bolder manner by rescuing slaves from the owner or a kidnapper.²¹ The extraordinary events related by Levi North give one an example of an exciting rescue case at Princeton. Two villainous looking men were seen in the vicinity of a rum shop, the New York House. During the day they made arrangements with Milo Kendall, a pro-slavery man, to defend them. The next morning, armed, they went just out of town to the meadow of a farmer named Matson, where they found John Bucknor, a colored man, mowing. He submitted to them and with his hands tied was led to the barroom of the New York House. But he was not along long, for soon the fearless Owen Lovejoy with other companions was by his side. A warrant charging the kidnappers with riot was drawn up and all were marched off to the courthouse by the sheriff. The question was how to liberate John legally from his captive. It was decided that since they

21. In order to avoid violating the law of the land the freedom of the fugitive slave was sometimes purchased by their friends. The citizens of Alton, rather than see a colored girl, Amanda Cheeser, return to slavery, raised twelve hundred dollars, purchased and freed her. Springfield Journal, January 21, 1853. The colored citizens held a public meeting at the African Baptist Church to pass resolutions thanking their white friends for befriending the girl. Alton Daily Courier, January 26, 1853. Two months later in the Alton Daily Courier this item appeared, "In order that the people of Central Illinois may keep posted upon the prices of negroes and know how much to pay hereafter when raising money to pay for the fugitive, we will publish from time to time notices of sales and prices." Ibid., March 1, 1853. p. 2. This is not a sarcastic comment, for at the time of the rescue in this same paper it was stated that the Courier stood for the laws of the country, but it was glad that the fugitive slave's freedom was purchased by her friends.

had taken the negro by no legal process, he should be set free. The rowdies, finding that his friends were likely to release him, resolved to use force. A wagon was placed in readiness for their use, but their plans were overheard, and the constable and sheriff were informed. In accordance with the plans of John's enemies, the owner of the wagon rushed in, saying with a loud voice that he was authorized to take John before another magistrate and seized him. Instantly a row commenced. John's rope was severed, and he was hurried down the stairs by his friends.

The door was closed by Levi North to keep the rowdies in. In the meantime John ran, followed by Owen Lovejoy, with more of his friends ahead of him. After running about thirty yards he was tripped up, but recovering his balance he ran on until he was met by a man who knew his predicament and gave him a horse. He finally brought up at Lovejoy's home "where at some time to the world unknown he took to the cars."²²

The abolitionists of Sparta armed themselves and threatened to attack a band of Missourians if they made any effort to recover a fugitive hiding there. Needless to say, the slave hunters returned home without their property.²³ An abduction of two negro apprentices, boy and girl, was frustrated by the indignant villagers of Wilmington, Will County, who rushed forth to rescue the helpless. The kidnappers were terrified and pleaded faithfully never to come again.²⁴

The colored population of Chicago was always ready to relieve a slave-owner of his property. Stephen A. Nuckles of Nebraska City caused the arrest of a colored girl whom he claimed as his slave. When she was being taken before the

22. Western Citizen, July 17, 1849.

23. This is an exchange from the Cape Girardeau Eagle, a Missouri paper which also says, "We understand that several negroes belonging to persons in Missouri, are harbored in Sparta and the neighborhood by three villains, and efforts should be made to recover them." Belleville Advocate, September 25, 1851.

24. Western Citizen, December 4, 1849. The citizens of Urbana and La Salle rescued negroes from kidnappers. Urbana Union, September 14, 1854; Free West, July 20, 1854.

Justice a conflict occurred between him and a lot of negroes, the result being the escape of the girl.²⁵ They had the advantage of seeing the fugitive whom they had rescued, immediately embark for Canada.

25. Aurora Beacon Supplement, November 15, 1860.

V - ILLINOIS AND THE FUGITIVE IN CANADA

Assistance of the fugitive involved an understanding of his ultimate destination even when there was no knowledge of the existence of the more remote stations. Canada meant liberty, hence the fugitive was following the direction of the North Star, en route by the Underground Railroad for freedom's domain. Therefore the question naturally arises as to whether there was any cooperation between the fugitive's friends in Illinois and the organizations in Canada which were helping the fugitive to adjust himself to freedom. The Western Citizen, as the organ of the abolition movement in Illinois, served to disseminate all available information concerning the fugitive slave; through its columns, therefore, these organizations made their appeal for support. In order to make this appeal more concrete, they told of the location, establishment and progress of their missions.

In answer to inquiries relative to Dawn Mission, made by the editors of the Western Citizen, Eastman and McClellan, Hiram Wilson wrote September 15, 1849, concerning the beginning of his work. His services in this refuge began October, 1836. He first served the auspices of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York. His agency for this society ceased, but his services as a missionary were continued until the Canada Mission became extensively known to the public. It became necessary to introduce other missionaries for the destitute refugees who were scattered through the province. These were all under his care as a general agent and itinerant missionary. As a pioneer in the field, it devolved upon him to prepare the way and introduce some seventy other persons. For more than three years previous to 1842 he resided in the City of Toronto.

As a resting-place and temporary home of the fugitive, his home was greatly thronged.¹

In 1842, a convention of colored people called to decide upon the expenditure of some fifteen thousand dollars collected by a Quaker, James C. Fuller, in England. They decided to start a manual labor school and to locate it at Dawn.² According to Wilson, they purchased three hundred acres of improved land in the township of Dawn at the head of the navigation of the Sydenham River and commenced clearing, planting, and educating³. Wilson changed the direction of his labors and location from Toronto to Dawn for the purpose of settling these families and heading the interests of Christian education in their midst with emphasis on the Industrial Manual System. From a small beginning of some forty persons their numbers increased to three hundred.⁴

J. E. Ambrose of Elgin, Illinois, who was evidently in communication with Canadian missionaries,⁵ contributed information to the Western Citizen concerning the colored people. His purpose may have been to show the negroes the opportunities for securing land cheaply, and the advantages of living in Canada. In 1820 General Simcoe, Governor-General of Canada, requested his home government to lay out a township of land on Lake Simcoe. This land, bordering on Owen's Sound was not offered to colored persons exclusively, but by improving it, they could have fifty acres and the privilege of buying fifty acres more. In 1820,

1. Western Citizen, October 2, 1849. Canada Mission, Dawn Mills, September 15, 1849. Reverend Hiram Wilson to Eastman and McClellan, editors of the Western Citizen.

2. Siebert, The Underground Railroad, p. 105.

3. Western Citizen, October 2, 1849.

4. Ibid., p. 1., c. 3.

5. In 1853 Ambrose received an appeal from Chatham, Canada West, saying that they are in great straits and need immediate help. Western Citizen, February 18, 1851.

twelve families made a commencement. By 1839 there were thirty-three families. The land was good and the timber superior. In 1851, some colored persons were going up and making an effort to settle. To what extent these negroes were fugitives can not be said, but one would imagine that those who would undertake this proposition were negroes who had been in Canada for some time and had become somewhat independent financially.

In 1824, four hundred sixty persons contracted with the Canada Company for a township near London and were to pay for it in ten years. It was thickly settled and was called Wilberforce settlement.

Twelve miles south of Chatham, William King established a colony called King's Settlement. King, a Presbyterian minister, formerly a slaveholder in the South freed his slaves, went to Canada, and bought a large tract of land in company with others. This land, divided into lots of fifty acres, was sold to colored men at two dollars and fifty cents per acres with six per cent interest. The first payment down was twelve dollars and fifty cents.

At Sandwich on the Detroit River and Lake Erie there were large settlements. Besides the settlements on Lake Simcoe at Wilberforce, King's Settlement at Buxton and Sandwich, there were several scattered over various parts of Canada.⁶

From the report of Hanson, a colored agent for the self-emancipation of slaves, which was made before the Congregational societies of Chicago, one gains further information concerning the fugitive in Canada. He states that the number of settlers in the missions with those who were living independently was estimated at fifteen thousand in 1845. All came from different states by different

6. Western Citizen, February 18, 1851. Contributed by J. E. Ambrose, Elgin, Illinois.

processes. Some had been there fifteen years, but the majority had come in the period of the forties. In the vicinity of Dawn, the population was scattered over a territory one hundred miles in length by sixty miles in breadth, the south point being forty miles above Detroit, Michigan, on the east side of the river. This distribution of the settlers made it difficult for Wilson, a missionary, to reach them all. There were one thousand people in this district, the number in the mission being three hundred.⁷

A statistical report of the colored population in Canada, published in the African repository at Washington, which computed the number at five thousand, was questioned by Wilson in his letter to the Western Citizen of October 2, 1849. This professed to be an official census as taken in 1817, but Wilson denied the fact that such a census had ever been taken, for neither he nor the negroes knew of it. When he travelled through Canada in 1837, from the best information he could get, he computed the negroes at ten thousand. At a convention of negroes in 1840, they estimated their numbers at twelve thousand, five hundred. The increase by birth and immigration could not have been less than one thousand annually; therefore, if carefully numbered, they could not be much less than twenty thousand.⁸

7. Western Citizen, March 6, 1845.

8. Western Citizen, October 2, 1849. Hiram Wilson to Western Citizen.

Howe comes to the conclusion that blacks were included in the whites column. In the census of 1860, the number of colored residents of Toronto was given as five hundred ten. George A. Barker, secretary of the Board of School Trustees, furnished a certified copy of the number of colored residents, which amounted to nine hundred thirty-four. The Mayor of London, Canada West, estimated the number of families among colored population at seventy-five, but the census made it only thirty-six. S. G. Howe. Report on the Refugees from Slavery in Canada West. p. 16.

Hanson in his report says that the location of Dawn was the best in the province. The land was extremely fertile, producing wheat, oats, corn, rye, and tobacco, all of which found a ready market in Detroit and the neighboring towns and settlements.⁹ Many of the colonists owned tracts of ten, fifteen and twenty acres, mostly under cultivation, while others more enterprising, became prosperous farmers.¹⁰ In an article signed by a certain E. Smith some negroes were worth thousands of dollars. Their condition was much better than in the United States.¹¹

When the fugitives first came, they were like children, easily discouraged in clearing up the land. For the first four or five years they were thriftless, because in slavery they had been accustomed to having their work planned for them. When they came to Canada, where they were forced to arrange their plans for themselves, they were confused at first, but after a time they became industrious and good citizens.¹² Wilson said that the improved conditions of these settlers in Dawn and its vicinity was noticed and commended by many men of good standing in that part of Canada, among whom was the High Sheriff, who was a "very observing man."¹³ It must have been encouraging for the friends of the fugitive in Illinois to learn that in Canada, in contrast to the United States, the negroes engaged in more responsible employment, hence they were more respected. Few were to be seen working in taverns.

9. Western Citizen, March 6. 1845. Hanson's report taken from Congregational Journal.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., March 15, 1849. p. 2, c. 6. E. Smith "Freed Slaves - How They Prosper."

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., October 2, 1849., p. 1, c. 3. Hiram Wilson to Western Citizen.

14. Ibid., March 15, 1849. E. Smith.

The fugitives wished to consider themselves self-sufficient. They resented being considered as objects of charity, for they wanted their former masters to know that they considered their condition bettered through freedom, and that they had no desire to resume their life in slavery.¹⁵ The picture of a lazy, poor, starving community for whom annual donations of clothing were necessary to keep them from suffering was regarded a great injustice. According to a correspondent of the True Wesleyan, in a convention of the fugitives at Drumnondsville they passed resolutions requesting their friends in the States to send no more clothing to Canada, except for newcomers and the schools.¹⁶

Although the fugitives were able to eke out a living from the soil, they were pitifully ignorant and needed education to enable them to utilize the advantages of freedom in Canada. This responsibility was borne with difficulty by the missionaries. Of three hundred negroes Hanson saw collected at a religious meeting, not one could read or write, and neither could he, himself, a Methodist preacher, until he was instructed by his little boy. He reported that there was an attempt being made to erect a seminary at the cost of two thousand dollars, in which two hundred negro children and youth could be instructed.¹⁷ At Amherstburg, where Isaac Rice was doing mission work, they built a school for eighty scholars.¹⁸ In the winter of 1848, Wilson had a school of sixty scholars. In addition, his wife instructed

15. Western Citizen, March 15, 1849.

16. Ibid., March 13, 1849.

One of the objects of the "True Bands" organized by negroes was to put a stop to "begging", that is, going to the United States and misrepresenting their condition, raising large sums of money, the benefit of which the fugitives never received. The first Band was in Malden, September, 1854. Benjamin Drew, A North-Side View of Slavery. p. 236

17. Ibid., March 6, 1845.

18. Ibid., October 9, 1849. Canada Mission, Amherstburg, September 27, 1849. Isaac Rice to the Editors of the Western Citizen.

the girls in letters and needlework. On her sewing days, the house was thronged with girls and mothers to the number of thirty, who had come from distances of two and three miles.¹⁹ King, in his settlement, had a school which he used also for religious worship.²⁰

In spite of the fact that the people were assured that Canada was a safe refuge for the slave, in 1843, the people became alarmed at the fugitive clause in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. It was agreed in the treaty "that the United States and Her Britannic Majesty shall, upon mutual requisitions by them, or their ministers, officers, authorities, respectively made, deliver up to justice all persons, who being charged with the crime of murder, or piracy, or arson, or robbery, or forgery, or the utterance of forged paper, committed within the jurisdiction of either, shall seek an asylum, or shall be found within the territories of the other....."²¹ In order to show the true attitude toward the slave, the interpretations of Lords Aberdeen, Brougham, and Ashburton were published in the Western Citizen. In the course of the discussion in the British House of Lords upon the motion of the Earl of Aberdeen for a second reading of the bill relating to the apprehension of the fugitive from justice, under the Treaty, his lordship remarked that it had been supposed that under this bill fugitive slaves would be given up, but there was no intention of introducing any such provision. To escape from slavery was no crime; on the contrary, the condition of the slave endeavoring to escape was to be regarded with much sympathy. He knew it had been said that a fugi-

19. Western Citizen, October 23, 1849. Hiram Wilson

20. Ibid., February 18, 1851. J. E. Ambrose, Elgin, Illinois.

21. House Documents, Volume I., U. S. 27th Congress, Session 3, 418.

tive slave was guilty of robbery in carrying off the clothes he had on, which were the property of the one who claimed to be the owner of the slave, but to take such clothes was no theft. Neither was it a theft to take anything which would aid him in his flight, as a horse or boat. Lord Brougham agreed with his explanation, and said that it need not be included in the bill. According to Lord Ashburton, it was now a settled fact that a slave arriving in British territory, under any circumstances never could be claimed or rendered liable to personal service.²²

Further assurance was gained by the reply of Lord Ashburton to Thomas Clarkson, President of the British Anti-Slavery Society of England. When Clarkson first knew of the treaty which the bill before the Parliament was designed to execute, he foresaw that the masters of the slaves in southern states would avail themselves of it to reclaim the fugitives in Canada. Lord Ashburton, however, told him that the treaty would not act in that way, for if it did it would be dissolved. Clarkson feared that the section in which it would be possible for a slave to be given up for robbery, might be construed to mean petty thefts, such as taking the means of escape. This fear was answered by saying that the use of a boat or any means of escape is not a theft. Fugitives will only be delivered up for crimes mentioned in the treaty.²³

22. Western Citizen, August 10, 1843. "British Treaty - Fugitive Slaves."

23. Thomas Clarkson to his Excellency, Sir Charles Metcalfe, Bart., Governor General of Canada. Clarkson especially emphasized the point that England was watching with anxiety the outcome of the treaty when it comes into operation, and that they would be grateful for any act of humanity shown on the part of his Excellency toward these unfortunate people. Western Citizen, December 18, 1843.

A memorial was addressed to the Congress of United States relative to the fugitive slave in which a request was made that negotiations be instituted between the government of the United States and Great Britain to provide for some satisfactory mode of preventing the escape of slaves into British possessions, and for their apprehension and redelivery after they have crossed the northern lakes. The Western Citizen showed its faith in the British Government by answering that evidently Congress is ignorant of Great Britain's attitude toward fugitive slaves, for when an attempt was made to insert such a clause, Lord Ashburton would not listen.²⁴

The settlements for the negroes depended upon voluntary contributions. In 1849, they needed money and needed it badly. The emphasis was placed upon the need of funds for the establishment and support of schools. In August of 1849, Hiram Wilson appealed to the people of Illinois through the Western Citizen for aid. It was recommended by the newspaper that the pastors of the churches advocate the cause and take up contributions to aid the mission, and that the Ladies Anti-Slavery Society convert their means into money which was needed. This evidently had not been the first appeal, for in the same paper, Wilson acknowledged the receipt of "Your very welcome and encouraging letter of June 23, also the thirteen dollars you enclosed for the purpose of paying the freightage on a box and barrel of clothing you forwarded at that time."²⁵

The call for help also came from Isaac Rice of Amherstburg. For three months they had been unable to do mission work. Because of lack of funds, they could not pay the freight on boxes sent to them with relief for the fugitives. Clothing was especially necessary at Amherstburg, for it was a fugitive station where nearly all the slaves landed. All money received had been put into finishing and paying

24. Western Citizen, February 2, 1847.

25. Western Citizen, August 21, 1849. Dawn Mills, Canada West. August 10, 1849. Hiram Wilson to Eastman and McClellan, editors of the Western Citizen.

for a school and mission house. Some of the uses for the money were a house instead of an open shed to be used for a kitchen, washhouse, wood room, cellar or root house, the upper part for a store room, where wheat, corn, oats, or flour could be stored, for sickness, funerals, freight bills, and a garden. Over fifty slaves had come to them in the past summer, and these and more in the future would have to be boarded until rested. To meet these expenses three hundred dollars were asked for.²⁶

Dawn Mission, due to defective management was burdened with debt in 1849. As a result there was no surplus left from the annual income for the cause of education. One hundred fifty dollars were necessary to bring up arrears, and Wilson's plea was "Could we have three hundred dollars. We are dependent upon voluntary support."²⁷

Wilson came to Illinois in November, 1849, on business connected with his work among the fugitives. His purpose was to visit the state and spend a few weeks soliciting contributions.²⁸ Among the communities responding, one finds counties

26. Western Citizen, October 9, 1849. Canada Mission, Amherstburg, September 27, 1849. Isaac Rice to the Editors of the Western Citizen.

27. Western Citizen, October 23, 1849. Dawn Mills, Canada West, October 13, 1849. Hiram Wilson to Eastman and McClelland, editors of the Western Citizen.

28. The results of his work were published in the Western Citizen at the request of Wilson, who said, "Please have the kindness to insert in your paper the following acknowledgment of receipts in aid of the Dawn Mission to refugee slaves in Canada West. For reasons which I have not time to state, my receipts have been small, as the aggregate of three weeks of incessant toil will show, but those who have contributed from pure love to Christ and humanity, to help and sustain Samaritan like services will please accept the sincere thanks of their faithful and devoted, servant, Hiram Wilson."

Receipts -- Aurora, Kane County, Congregational Church, \$2.80; Bloomingtondale, \$1.37; Batavia, \$1.35; Bristol, Kendall County, \$4.66; Ladies Anti-Slavery Society per Mrs. McClellan, \$2; Mrs. McClellan, \$.50; Rev. W. Beardsley, 50c; Rev. Farnham, \$2.50; Chicago, First Presbyterian Church, \$14.80; ---\$6.16; Baptist Tabernacle, \$2.87; C. B. Nelson, \$1; J. B. D., \$1; Mrs. Bates, \$1; Mrs. Stuart, \$.38; O. Davidson, \$1; Cash, \$4; J. H. Collins \$5; Mrs. Laflin, \$1; Mr. Downs, \$1; Isaac Clay, \$1; W. Johnson, \$.94; H. Smith, \$1; Cash, \$1; Mrs. Creary, \$.25; P. Carpenter (box of candles), \$2; J. Johnston, (1 coat) \$7; Dundee, Kane County, Congregational Church, \$5; Elgin, \$14; Mrs. H. Gifford, \$1; Orangeville, Dupage County, \$1.25; Joliet, Will County, G. H. Woodruff, \$1; H. P. Marsh, \$.50; R. Hanse, \$.53; Mr. Haven, \$1; Lockport, O. R. Gooding, \$5; C. Butler, \$.50; W. S. Mason, \$11; Plainfield, \$3.30; Mrs. Royce and family, \$1; Mrs. Pratt, \$.50; Genoa, by letter through Abner Jackman, \$6.50. Total -- \$105.97. New Buffalo, November 27, 1849. Hiram Wilson. Western Citizen, December 4, 1849.

and towns which were prominent in giving aid to the fugitive: Aurora, Kane County; Bristol, Kendall County; Joliet, Will County. Some leaders of the Underground Railroad are among the donors: J. H. Collins and Philo Carpenter of Chicago, and Haven of Will County. These places and these people, however, were all in the vicinity of Chicago, which was confessedly anti-slavery in sentiment. No doubt in the three weeks Wilson did not have sufficient time to tour the whole state. It may be taken for granted that Chicago would be the first place visited, and that response would be given to his appeal. The evidence would be more conclusive if the contributing localities were scattered and less in communication with Chicago, the terminus of the Underground Railroad. Nevertheless, this is evidence of the refugee's friends in Canada cooperating with his friends in Illinois, both through an anti-slavery paper, the Western Citizen, which is the source of information concerning the fugitive in Canada, and in the person of a missionary, Hiram Wilson.

After seeing how little was contributed in response to the appeal of Wilson, it may be asked if all this discussion of the Canadian situation in the Western Citizen, which was obviously to gain financial support, was of any importance in relation to the Underground Railroad. It is probable that with a clearer idea of the destination of the fugitive, and also with a small part in the support of the missions, the abolitionists realized their obligations toward the negro more deeply, and thus became more active in the Underground Railroad.

VI - DEGREE OF ORGANIZATION AND MOTIVE

Judging from the facts concerning the Underground Railroad, it is easily seen that while there was no formal organization, there was a practical organization suited for the emergency of the moment and based on the cooperation of neighbors. A terminology analagous to that of a railroad system sprang up in connection with this secret process¹. While it served to mystify the public², it may have thrown a glamour over the whole movement, thus having the psychological effect of making the conductors feel that they really were a part of a well organized system. They may have realized that while each one was cooperating only with his sympathetic neighbor, there was a series of such neighbors who made it their business to see that the fugitive progressed one step nearer Canada.

A splendid illustration of the assumption of a well organized system in Underground Railroad activities is to be found in the report of the Western Citizen of September, 1846, that "the Northwest branch of the great subterranean thoroughfare

1. The following is a typical report of the activity of the Underground Railroad expressed in this terminology. "A fugitive took his departure for a free country in the direction of the North Star, via the Underground Railroad, which is in good running order." Aurora Guardian, February 23, 1853.

2. An advertisement of the readiness of people to help the fugitives to gain freedom appeared in the following mystifying style, "Old line of stage to Canada via Mt. Hope. Proprietors of above line inform public that they are prepared to accommodate colored men, women, and children who wish to emigrate to Canada, with free passage, as they are determined not to be outdone by any other line....John Morse, Agent, McLean County, September, 1844." Western Citizen, October 24, 1844.

has been doing brisk business the present season and we understand that the stock is several per cent above par. A dividend will probably be declared soon.³ Peter Stewart shared the honor of being called "President of the Underground Railroad," with Dr. Dyer of Chicago. At a meeting of the Liberty Association, Lemuel C. Freer announced that the President of the Underground Railroad would then declare a dividend to the stockholders. Dr. Dyer then arose and introduced to the meeting a "Southern gentleman", his wife and children, who had that day arrived on the cars, and who, he said, were a greater dividend than that of any other railroad company in the state.⁴

Orators like Owen Lovejoy and Ichabod Coddington were sent around to encourage the people in different towns.⁵ The murder of a fugitive by his pursuers aroused the community of Shelbyville to such an extent that Robert Rutherford, a correspondent of the Western Citizen, thought that "much good might be done by a lecturer" and advised that Lovejoy, Blanchard, or Cross come over.⁶ It is easily inferred that the publication of a series of "Tales of Fugitives" was to stimulate the activity of the Underground Railroad. They were made effective by having the fugitive tell his own story. For example in a "Conversation with a Chattel" the negro says that although he had been told by white folks in the South that this was a poor country, very cold, the people mean, and that they could only make a living by stealing from one another, he thought that these people could not do any worse than steal all he had, as the southern people had done, so he decided to come

3. Western Citizen, September 15, 1846.

4. Ibid, December 26, 1846.

5. Carrie Prudence Kofoid, Puritan Interest in the Formative Years of Illinois History; Transactions of Illinois State Historical Society, 1905, p.314.

6. Western Citizen, September 25, 1849.

up and see. The narrator ended his story by stating that this was the most intelligent piece of merchandise that had fallen in his way. He gave it a ticket on the Underground Railroad, and soon this tame beast found himself transformed into a man.⁷

The negro population of Chicago was organized to thwart all attempts to capture or kidnap a fugitive. September 30, 1850, they met at the African Methodist Church on Wells Street to take into consideration the course to pursue in case attempts should be made to arrest fugitives.⁸ As a result of the meeting, they effected a colored police organization consisting of seven divisions which in turn were to patrol the city.⁹

The enemies of the fugitive fully realized the actual result of the Underground system when they said that "the state of insecurity is becoming greater every dayon account of a more perfect organization and concert of action of the anti-slavery men in Illinois."¹⁰ The abolitionists of Farmington showed themselves capable of concerted action when they saw that two fugitives tracked by slave hunters were in danger of being captured. Jacob Knightlinger, Justice of the Peace, directed the pursuers on to Rochester. In the meantime the friends of the negroes at Farmington, having learned of the plan, "started to see if the cars were in readiness at Rochester and arrived just in time to

Wood up the fires and keep them flashing
While the train went onward dashing.

Four hours after this, along came the slave hunters, who searched the premises of two abolitionists and found no negroes."¹¹ Reverend Wright, one of these abolitionists, spoke of this incident in his journal on January 5, 1847. He said, "They

7. Ibid., November 30, 1843.

8. Chicago Daily Journal, October 3, 1850.

9. Ibid., October 8, 1850.

10. Western Citizen, February 2, 1847.

11. Ibid., November 24, 1846. Quoted from the St. Louis Era.

searched our premises in vain, however, for the birds had flown, having got a wink from friends at Farmington that they were pursued."¹²

Between Galesburg, Andover, and Ontario the Underground Railroad worked efficiently. On one occasion Conductor Neely with four passengers from Galesburg arrived at the residence of Hod Powell at Ontario. After a partial night's lodging and a meal, Powell took his load to Andover, the next station.¹³ The story of Erastus Mahan of McLean County gives one an example of a fugitive being piloted from one point to another. Two colored people got off the North-bound train of the Chicago and Alton Railroad in Lexington. They were directed to the home of his aunt, Widow Mahan. Here they frankly admitted they were runaway slaves. Mrs. Mahan sent for her nephew immediately. He took them to the house of S. S. Wright, about three miles from town where they remained until it was decided that the search was abandoned. John and Edward Mahan then carried them to the home of a man by the name of Richardson, who lived about nine miles south of Pontiac. They stayed there one night and were then sent on to Chicago.¹⁴

Organization seems to have resolved itself into two separate stages. In the first instance, the fugitive was given a meal, some clothing, and information as to the location of the next friendly house. In the second instance, the fugitive received the same attention, and in addition was piloted onward to the next station; when there was a party in close pursuit, the conductors acted more swiftly and showed a greater degree of cooperation.

The conductors made it a matter of conscience to aid the fugitive in any way, and if it was necessary, they felt it a moral obligation to help him on his way.¹⁵ It was resolved by the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society "that we would

12. History of Knox County, p. 426.

13. Ibid., p. 211.

14. Erastus Mahan, Friends of Liberty on the Mackinaw; McLean County Historical Society Transactions, Vol. I, p. 402.

15. Western Citizen, December 28, 1843.

earnestly entreat our brethern and fellow citizens, by all that is interesting in human relations, by all that is desirable in the favor of God....to extend a hand of kindness and hospitality in all things necessary for his escape, to every parting fugitive from the Southern prison house, who may come within reach of our benevolence."¹⁶ The prevailing anti-slavery sentiment and the belief that such matters were subject to a higher law took the place of a machinery of formal organization. They were held together by the common vision of the goal toward which they were working, the freedom of the fugitive from slavery.

16. Ibid., August 5, 1842.

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